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AUTHOR Gonzalez, Kenneth P.
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ABSTRACT

This study examined the experiences of faculty members in the first year of a new university. Twelve faculty at the new institution were interviewed and observed during the 1995-96 academic year. The analysis presented in this paper is based on one particular interview. Overall, six concrete universals were found during the analysis: (1) the advertisement and the formation of culture; (2) the faculty retreat and the reinforcement of the university culture; (3) working within a system and the encounter of technical structural constraints; (4) interdisciplinary, outcome-based education and the cultural constraints of the traditional paradigm; (5) decision making and constraints related to power relationships; and (6) influencing change--individual and collective agency. Although initially highly optimistic about the possibilities presented by the new institution, faculty went through key moments that constrained their ability to implement aspects of the university's vision, such as outcome-based learning and assessment. The results are discussed in light of social theory, specifically structuralism, interactionism, human agency, and social constructivism. (Contains 11 references.) (MDM)

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In Search of a New Paradigm for Higher Education: A Case Analysis of Faculty Experiences in the First Year of a New University

Kenneth P. González
Education Policy Studies
Arizona State University

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In Search of a New Paradigm for Higher Education: A Case Analysis of Faculty Experiences in the First Year of a New University

ABSTRACT

The paper describes the findings of a research study investigating the experiences of faculty members in the first year of a new university. The goal of the research study was to understand the social processes and social structure of a new institution of higher education and the possible revolution of innovation. This is paper is part of a large project which seeks to construct a framework that recognizes the influence of both social structure and human agency on organizational actions.

In Search of a New Paradigm for Higher Education: A Case Analysis of Faculty Experiences in the First Year of a New University

Introduction

"While men [and women] make their own history, they do not make it as they please."
Karl Marx

Pacific University (pseudonym) is a state university that was part of a federal conversion project which involved converting previously closed military bases into educational institutions. As a model for this federal project, Pacific University attained funding from the federal government to help with it's start-up costs. Pacific University is also part of a state system of universities. This campus is the twenty-first in this system. Adding to the unique context of this new university was it's innovative vision. The origins of this vision are found both at the state and system level. Although the state assessed a clear need for an additional campus, they also indicated a need to provide the state's higher educational community with a model of innovation in the curriculum and delivery of educational services. At the system level, a new chancellor had arrived on the scene, and also was wanting to experiment with the mission and organizational processes of higher educational institutions. As a result, both the state and the system viewed Pacific University as an opportunity to experiment with higher education.

To focus these innovative aspirations, a unique vision statement was developed by the university's provost and community members inside and outside of the university system. There are five focal areas that represent the innovative character of the university's vision statement. The vision seeks the creation of (a) an interdisciplinary curriculum; (b) an outcome-based learning environment; (c) innovative technology; (d) a service learning environment; and (e) a pluralistic academic community.

Thirteen planning (founding) faculty members arrived in January of 1995 to plan and develop the academic philosophy, structure, and curriculum for the university. With classes scheduled to begin in August of 1995, the faculty and administrators had only eight months to transform the words in the vision statement into a living and breathing university. Some of the major events and activities that occurred over this period are outlined in Figure 1. Pacific University officially opened in the fall of 1995 with 600 students and approximately thirty-five faculty members.

The purpose of this research is to understand the social processes and social structure of this institution and the possible revolution of innovation. This paper is part of a larger project which seeks to construct a framework that recognizes the influence of both social structure and human agency on social (organizational) action.

Understanding the influence of both social structure and human agency is important for higher education if we are to understand the possibilities of accomplishing institutional change and the limitations therein. The introductory quote by Marx (1972), speaks well to a common occurrence in efforts to accomplish planned change, namely that such change rarely, if ever, occurs as smoothly or intentionally as planned (Neumann, 1995; Tierney, 1988). What are the possible barriers/constraints that higher educational organizations seeking to enact institutional change may face; how might these barriers/constraints effect the intended outcome of these institutions, and in what ways can individuals and groups within these institutions enact their agency to overcome these barriers/constraints?

This paper will continue with a discussion about the concepts of social structure and agency, followed by a discussion of postsecondary research related to structure and agency. Next, the research methods and the context of the research site will be presented, followed by the research findings. A discussion of the findings and their implications for the study of higher educational organizations seeking institutional change will conclude the paper. Before discussing structure and agency, I must first

point out that the explanations of structure and agency on human action have historically been done separately utilizing the frameworks of structuralism and interactionism.

Structuralists and the Social Structure

Explaining the influence of social structure on human action is most often done using a structuralist framework. This framework argues that social structure as culture determines human action. In other words, human action is largely enactments of the culture found in a particular setting.

The structuralist framework begins by assuming social structure as culturally guided patterns of action. Thus, human action is explained in structural terms when actions are seen to be congruent with applicable norms. Here, culture is viewed as the major independent variable in the explanation of human action.

Structuralists extend their framework by utilizing socialization as the process in which culture "shows-up" in human action. Structuralists see the internalization of cultural norms as the primary means by which culture is transmitted and thereby exercises a controlling influence on action. Structuralists argue that in this socialization process cultural members are provided with a deeply internalized hierarchy of precognitive preferences that subsequently guide and control behavior. It is through the process of socialization that human action becomes enactments of culture (Stokes & Hewitt, 1976). Therefore, for researchers to understand and explain human action, the cultural norms and/or process of socialization in a particular setting must be uncovered.

For structuralists, the strength of this framework is it's ability to explain the persistent nature of human action or "why things are the way they are." At the same time, because of it's deterministic nature, this strength leads also to it's very weakness,

which is it's inability to explain how things change over time and the role human beings have (their agency) in the accomplishment of change.

Interactionists and Human Agency

Interactionists, whose theory was born largely out of the criticisms of the structuralist framework, argue that relatively little routine interaction appears to be controlled by deeply internalized cultural norms. They note that much of the empirical evidence shows that human action is much more fluid, open and negotiable. They also argue that because the social world is so ambiguous and problematic in day-to-day situations, people are forced to play a major role in the meaning-making of their situations (Blumer, 1969). For interactionists, human action is not determined by culture through socialization, but occurs as a result of the meaning people make in their interactions with others in particular situational contexts. Social order is seen primarily in terms of the process of joint action in which situations are defined, people mutually align their conduct, and objects and events are given meaning as they become incorporated in ongoing interaction (Blumer, 1969). The image conveyed is virtually limitless creation of culture (shared definitions of situations and objects) and thus, nearly complete flexibility in the form and direction of conduct.

While the strength of the interactionists framework is it's ability to explain social change and the role of individuals in the process of change, it's weakness, opposite of that of the structuralists, is it's inability to explain the fact that numerous patterns of human action persist over long periods of time.

Structure and Agency in Postsecondary Studies

Questions historically posed within studies of postsecondary organizations have not directly asked the question of the relationship between structure and agency on organizational action. In the last decade or so, however, a growing body of research has utilized frameworks of culture (Tierney, 1988), socialization (Tierney &

Bensimon, 1996), and social constructivism (Neumann, 1995a, 1995b) as a means to explain the influence of culture on organizational life, the meaning that is made in higher educational organizations, and the social construction of campus realities.

Culture and Socialization in Higher Education

Almost a decade ago, Tierney (1988) developed a cultural framework for colleges and universities. Tierney did not construct this framework to understand the process of change nor the roles of individuals in that process, but rather to explain, among other things, the presence and power cultural codes and conventions have in particular campus communities. He argued that by understanding the cultural codes, symbols and conventions (the culture) of a particular campus community, distinct problems could be overcome through reasoned reflection and consensual change (Tierney, 1988)

For Tierney, a cultural framework can be used as a tool to diagnose the life of a particular campus community. Once diagnosed, campus members would have a deeper understanding of their campus community, in general, and of potential organizational problems, in particular. From this understanding, a college community could then work proactively to remedy such problems.

Although Tierney highlights culture, the reader can implicitly see that he is also concerned with change. He takes the view that before individuals and groups can take action towards change, they must first have a cultural understanding of their campus environment.

Tierney (with Bensimon,1996)) extends his work of the cultural codes and conventions found on college campuses by investigating how these cultural codes and conventions became and remain powerful. He does this by exploring the process of socialization in higher education, specifically, the experiences of jr. faculty in the process of tenure and promotion (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996).

Although Tierney and Bensimon argue that they do not assume socialization to be a "process whereby the organization shapes the individual," they do view socialization as a "ritualized process that involves the transmission of organizational culture (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996, p. 36)."

This alternative assumption is extended in their belief that the tenure process "should" be a "bi-directional" process of socialization. In other words, "individual should be encouraged to influence and change the organization, just as the organizational mores may influence and change them (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996, p. 37)." Their work continues in this book by illuminating the current uni-directional nature of the tenure and promotion socialization process, and ending with a framework for reform that incorporates a "bi-directional scheme of socialization (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996, p. 37)."

The reader can see from this latest work of Tierney and Bensimon a movement closer to the relationship between structure and agency on organizational action. Investigating the implementation of their framework for reforming the tenure and promotion process, for example, could possibly illuminate moments when the individual (agency) changes the organization, and when the organization (structure) changes the individual.

Social constructivism and the creation of campus realities

For Neumann (1995a, 1995b), social constructivism assumes that individuals "respond not to realities that are changing around them in an objective sense, but to their own conceptions of whatever is happening (Neumann, 1995b, p. 253)." For Neumann, these conceptions may be constructed in many ways, but most often in "conversation with individuals whose credibility of interpretations defines them as leaders in an organization. (Neumann, 1995b, p. 253)."

Although Neumann does not use the concept of agency explicitly, her research on resource stress (1995a) shows how a president's actions and interactions with his campus community changed their perception of the campus' financial status. The image conveyed in this article was a leader (university president) un-problematically (and in some instances, unintentionally) changing the culture of a campus community. The unanswered question related to structure and agency asks: are there some cultural features in a campus community that a leader cannot change?

In a later article, Neumann (1995b) tackles this very question. Utilizing a framework of social constructivism along with the concepts of cognition and culture, Neumann explains how change occurs on a college campus as a result of the arrival of a new president. Although she does not use the concepts of structure and agency explicitly, her article clearly examines the relationship between the agency of this new president and the culture (persistent structure) found in the campus community. Among other questions, she asks: 1) to what extent would the new president be able to change the campus culture; and 2) to what extent would the culture of the campus shape his agendas or actions (Neumann, 1995b, p 254)

What she found was that while some of the actions (intended or unintended) of the president were influential in changing the campus's perception of it's financial status, more fundamentally embedded characteristics of the campus's culture could not be changed.

Although she describes some of the actions this president took towards initiating and implementing change, we don't get a clear picture of the connections between his actions and the actual cultural change that did take place. Moreover, although the president was beginning to sense that one particular cultural feature of the campus was unchangeable, we don't get a clear picture of the process in which this occurred.

What are the connections between individual action and organizational culture? What does the *process* look like when an individual is either able or unable to change the culture of a college campus? These are two of several questions that lead into this present study.

Questions Unanswered and the Construction of a Structure and Agency Framework

Given the above unanswered questions along with the criticisms that the structuralists are overly deterministic and that interactionists cannot explain how or why patterns of social action persist, I seek to answer in this project whether it is possible to be both interactionist and structuralist? In other words, I seek to construct a structure and agency framework that recognizes the influence of both social structure and human agency on human (organizational) action.

The creation of a new university with a vision for innovation is a situation that lends itself well to better understanding the relationship between social structure and human agency. In order to construct a structure and agency framework, the following research questions guided my study: (a) how does organizational structure develop in the first year of this new university with a vision for innovation; (b) what existing or developing structures did a founding faculty member encounter and interpret as constraining or facilitating to the development of the university's vision; and (c) in what ways did this faculty member enact her agency to resist, reify, alter, or acquiesce to them?

Methods

A case study research design (Stake, 1994) was used, which allowed me to understand what was happening in terms of what participants revealed as their experiences. Although this paper presents only one founding faculty member's experiences in the first year of this new university, it reflects what I have learned comparatively and cumulatively from my analysis of 11 other faculty members during

this same time period. This process resembles what Frederick Erickson (1986) refers to as a search for "concrete universals arrived at by studying a specific case in great detail and then comparing it with other cases studied in equally great detail." What follows is a description of the data collection and analysis techniques used in this study.

Data Collection

Twelve faculty members were interviewed and observed throughout the 1995-96 academic year. However, only interviews conducted with one of the founding faculty members, Marilyn (pseudonym), will be presented in the analysis of this paper.

Participation in the research project involved five one-hour, audiotaped interviews between the months of August 1995 and May 1996. Interview sessions occurred approximately once every month and a half. The interviews were open-ended and the questions were constructed as the study progressed. New questions also emerged out of individual interview sessions. Observations were conducted during faculty curriculum planning and governance meetings, university-wide committee meetings, and administrative meetings. Document acquisition included planning documents, minutes of faculty meetings, publicity notices, and general information, university-wide Email messages.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data began by studying in great detail the experiences of Marilyn as a specific case and then comparing them with the experiences of the other 11 faculty members in equally great detail (Erickson, 1986). This process occurred in three phases: (a) her *anticipatory engagement,* which included her experiences prior to accepting the academic position, (b) her *initial engagement,* which related to her "first" experiences with the university, and (c) her *continuing engagement,* defined as her experiences subsequent to her initial engagement. In the process of arriving at the

concrete universals, the data were coded using categories related to the context and setting of campus situations, informant's definitions of campus situations, informants' ways of thinking about people and relationships, organizational processes and strategies, and campus activities and events (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). After categories were assigned to the contents of the interviews, observations, and documents, data were organized into broader categories of concrete universals relating to the concepts and relationships of structure and agency.

Findings

Six concrete universals were found in the analysis of the data. The six concrete universals were labeled as: (a) the advertisment (Ad) and the formation of culture; (b) the faculty retreat and the reinforcement of the university culture; (c) working within a system and the encounter of technical structural constraints; (d) interdisciplinary, outcome-based education and the cultural constraints of the traditional paradigm; (e) decision making and constraints related to power relationships; and (f) influencing change: individual and collective agency. What is also noteworthy regarding the findings is that each of these concrete universals compose "key moments" in which existing or emerging structure is seen to be facilitating or constraining the ability of the faculty to plan and implement the vision of this campus. Key moments of individual and collective agency also existed. It should also be noted that these concrete universals occurred within the three phases of anticipatory, initial, and continuing engagement.

Anticipatory Engagement

Anticipatory engagement refers to those experiences that occurred prior to the individual accepting a position at the university. These experiences included informal activities such as reading the advertisement for the position in an academic magazine, talking about the position and/or university with a colleague, and formal activities such

as the campus interview. These experiences are important in that they form an individual's initial understanding and assumptions of the values, goals and beliefs (the culture) of the university. Additionally, these experiences form the individual's expectations concerning the university in general, and her or his work in particular. If people act based on the meaning they give to things, then the first few experiences in their engagement with the university will give meaning to and be influential for their subsequent actions.

The "Ad" and the Formation of Culture

During this anticipatory engagement phase, many of the faculty spoke of the "ad in the Chronicle," and it's powerful influence on their understanding of the campus. For Marilyn, reading the ad in the Chronicle was also a salient experience. The description of her experience with the ad illuminated her emerging cultural understanding of the university. "Cultural understanding" refers to her view of the university's values, goals and beliefs. In the passage below she reflected on her reading of the "Ad in the Chronicle:"

> When I read the ad, which was in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, I was truly astonished. I actually had a visceral reaction because the ad sought people who were committed to the development of a pluralistic academic environment where all learn from and teach each other; which had a commitment to diversity, pluralism, community building, interdisciplinary studies, applied scholarship, a real commitment to serving the community, and the community's needs. I was just completely stunned that there could be such a place. And then to see that this was being started in one of the most beautiful places on the earth. I made a decision that day that I would do whatever it was in my power to get me here, period, because of the combination of that vision of this place, and the language in that ad, I have never seen language like that in an ad for academic positions. It sang the philosophy I have been trying to live for 20 years and have struggled so hard

> within other institutions to find. So, it was just absolutely marvelous. And that is what brought me here (Interview, 6/30/95).

From her experience in reading the ad, Marilyn constructed an image which included a campus that *values* a "pluralistic academic environment," that has *goals* of developing an "interdisciplinary" curriculum, and that has strong *beliefs* surrounding "diversity" and "serving the community." She also made a strong connection between the ad and her personal philosophy as well as her struggle to realize that philosophy in previous institutions. In sum, the meaning she made from this ad led to her actions of applying to and eventually accepting a position at, the university.

After reading the ad, Marilyn constructed a clear expectation from her interpretation of the position that was described. She states:

> Among my expectations were that this would be a truly collaborative, open, cooperative, environment, committed to pluralism in the sense that I mean by that. That word pluralism is tossed around an awful lot and means many different things to many different people. For me, it means, among other things, genuine and true mutuality of respect and openness in an environment of care and justice. And that's a very complex, an extremely complex notion, very, very hard to secure. But it was, I must confess, a dream I had based on the ad (Interview, 6/30/95).

Like other faculty members, Marilyn's interpretation of the ad led to the formation of a "dream" (an image) about this university; a dream in which she came to expect "mutuality of respect and openness in an atmosphere of care and justice."

Initial Engagement

Initial Engagement refers to an individual's first experiences on campus. These included experiences such as the first orientation session, the first faculty retreat, and the first faculty meeting.

It is during the phase of initial engagement, that an individual's early understanding of the values, beliefs, and goals of the university may be reinforced, altered, or dismissed altogether. What was important about this stage was the great influence experiences had to alter the initial understandings of a faculty member. At this moment, any initial understanding of the university culture was at a vulnerable state.

The Faculty Retreat and the Reinforcement of the University Culture

An initial engagement event that was significant to many of the faculty was the first faculty retreat and the "incredible connections that were made" surrounding the vision and "dreaming of what could be." For Marilyn, this was also a powerful moment. This event did not lead to an abandonment of her initial understanding of the university culture nor even an alteration, but rather, like other faculty, a strengthening, and reinforcement of her previous interpretation, understanding, and "dream" of what this university is all about. In the following passage she reflected on her experience at the first faculty retreat:

> The Bautista session which was attended by only faculty; this is where we shared our dreams and hopes with each other. It was a beautiful thing, just beautiful, the place was beautiful, the vibes were incredible. And we were just left to be open, with no constraints, dreaming about what might this be, what might we create. And one of the most beautiful things about that experience for me, personally, was to be in a room, there may have been about 14 of us, 14 people, who seemed to genuinely share this dream which if I try to explain it to other people they couldn't even grasp it, let alone share it. So, it was quite extraordinary. (Interview, 8/20/95)

From this passage, the formal group activity had a powerful influence on her early understanding of the university's values, beliefs, and goals. This group sharing of the "dream" not only reinforced her early understanding of the university, but was

also spoken of as a "powerful facilitating event" towards the development of the university's vision.

Continuing Engagement

Continuing Engagement refers to those experiences that occur subsequent to an individual's initial engagement. These experiences included subsequent formal activities such as university planning and faculty meetings, and subsequent informal activities such as lunch with a colleague or an off-campus social event. What is important about this stage was the great influence experiences had to strengthen the early formation of a person's understanding of the university. Also important in this stage was the increasingly patterned nature of organizational processes and relationships. It was in noticing these patterns that individuals began to question and critique organizational processes and relationships. It is not a coincidence that in this stage perceived constraints took on a more central focus and conflict emerged.

Constraints in this phase included technical constraints, cultural constraints, and constraints related to power relationships. In this phase, the role of individual and collective agency to resist, alter, reify, or throw out these existing and emerging structural constraints becomes more apparent.

Working within a System and the Emergence of Technical Structural Constraints

As planning moved into the process of implementation, many faculty spoke of working within a system and the limitations and constraints that came with this relationship. For Marilyn, trying to implement an outcome-based educational process within a traditionally, course-based system, illuminated un-anticipated technical constraints. Technical structural constraints refer to rules, regulations, and existing policies that constrain or are in conflict with the faculty's ability to develop an outcome-based university.

In the following passage, Marilyn reflected on her experience in trying to construct organizational structures to facilitate an outcome-based curriculum that is not tied to "seat time ("seat-time" is a term used in reference to the traditional curriculum of higher education and refers to the understanding that if a student takes a special number of classes and receives passing grades, a student will graduate from the university; whereas in an outcome-based curriculum a student cannot graduate from simply passing a class, but must demonstrate that she or he has the knowledge level of a set number of university wide, non-course-based, learning outcomes)." She stated:

> You know, we have a system that says explode the boundaries, do what you want, but by the way, all of your money is tied to seat-time, every dime. Your work load is tied to seat-time, your evaluations for promotion and tenure is tied to seat-time, but by the way, crash the boundaries and do your thing. These are not compatible messages. So, to what degree are we really free to explore? So, what we do is create a whole set of structures for our learning outcomes and projects, and university learning experiences which, unless I'm mistaken, could end up being on top of our regular load, on top of our regular system load which is in and of itself an outrageous load - no body could function well in that load. So this is about discovering our limits and trying to figure out creative ways of working around them. I think we're still trying to figure out our limits. (Interview, 9/8/95)

Here, Marilyn encountered the "technical structural constraints" of attempting to realize an innovative vision-- an innovative outcome-based curriculum that was in conflict with the system's policies and procedures. What Marilyn made relevant were the technical structural constraints related to the ways in which monies are allocated to the university and the processes of evaluating a faculty member for promotion and tenure, and how these are in direct conflict with the faculty's ability to implement an outcome-based curriculum. What is also noteworthy is that as Marilyn made relevant

these technical constraints she positioned herself to either reify the system's technical structure, or resist it and try and come up with "creative ways of working around them."

Interdisciplinary, Outcome-Based Education and the Cultural Constraints of the Traditional Paradigm

Another experience that many faculty spoke of was the tendency to "fall back" to the "traditional paradigm" or "old culture" of higher education -- especially during the process of developing interdisciplinary courses that would facilitate student's knowledge construction in particular learning outcomes. Cultural constraints refer to the traditionally held assumptions, expectations, and modes of behavior found in mainstream higher education that are in conflict with and constrain the faculty's ability to develop alternative processes and structures that facilitate the achievement of their vision--in this case, the development of an interdisciplinary, outcome based curriculum. In the passage below, Marilyn spoke of the tendency to "fall back" to the old paradigm of disciplinary based, seat-time, higher education. She states:

> Some of us were very disturbed by around May to discover that when pushed on deadlines, people retreated to disciplinary boundaries--very little interdisciplinary conversation, almost no focus on what we said was our center piece, which was learning outcomes. A real resistance to even having a conversation about learning outcomes. The conversation, I might add, we have yet to have. Despite the fact that we are built as a learning outcome institution, almost every conversation was about majors, course offerings, course offerings - at an institution that says it's not about seat-time, seat-time dominated 90% of the discussion. Do I understand why, oh absolutely, it's so much easier to talk about a course and seat-time than it is to talk about learning outcomes and crashing boundaries. (Interview, 9/8/95)

From this passage Marilyn identified the cultural constraints of traditional academia creeping back and in conflict with the goal of becoming a university "built on

learning outcomes." Here, as a result of pressures from deadlines, individuals "retreated" back to disciplinary modes of behavior, resisting engaging in dialogue about learning outcomes. In this passage Marilyn shared with us her experience of how difficult it was to leave behind traditional modes of behavior and subjects of communication.

Decision About Facilities and Majors and Constraints Related to Power Relationships

Early on, one of the goals, initiated by administrators, was to create a "unified" environment that ends the present "we vs. them" relationship between faculty and administrators found on most campuses. The plan of creating this "unified" environment included having administrators teach classes, and having faculty more involved in administrative issues and processes. Many of the faculty indicated that, although they were pleased to hear about this early on in their arrival on campus, particular moments of decision-making dampened their enthusiasm. Constraints related to power relationships referred to decisions and actions of persons in power positions that were in conflict with the goals, assumptions, and organizational processes required for the development of the university's vision. In the passage below, another salient experience for Marilyn illuminated her interpretation of the relationships between faculty and administrators concerning decision making. Here, she spoke of her experience with facilities planning:

> It begins for me personally in January, at a meeting, during which, we had just arrived. We meaning faculty, and we weren't asked, but were given a presentation on facilities. And we said, gee, wouldn't you like to have some input from faculty on facilities? Many of us believed that the space in which you teach profoundly affects what and how you teach; and this a revolutionary educational institution where learning is everything and we might really care about for example, not wanting to have structures that reinforce the dominant paradigm, by their space, by their configuration. And we were told, gee, actually all those plans have been made there's no room

> for faculty input. I think everybody here has done the best he or she can given the constraints facing us and one of the key constraints is the question of how much room do we really have to move. This is about discovering the limits again. With respect to facilities, the limits were profound. We had virtually no say. With respect to majors, the limits were substantive, but not in any way seriously problematic, I really think that we were able to work that through and come up with a list that most faculty can feel comfortable with, so I think we negotiated that well. With respect to priority hiring, there were many, many constraints made, cropped up in unpredicted ways, that was a very, very painful time for many people. (Interview, 9/8/95)

From this passage, Marilyn encountered the constraints related to the power relationships between faculty and administrators, and the subsequently questioned and critiqued the emerging decision making process. In regards to facility planning, the faculty were seen as having no power, "no say," in the decision making process. This pattern of decision making power between faculty and administrators was also seen in decisions concerning majors, and priority hiring. In the instance of majors, faculty experienced constraints, but were able to "negotiate" the process. In the instance of priority hiring, the faculty again were seen as having no power, "no say," in the decision making.

Influencing Change: Proseminar as a Case of Individual and Collective Agency

Influencing change, for many of the faculty, related to "particular moments" when an individual or group would recognize or "make relevant" a particular issue during the process of planning or implementing a project. Only at that time, when an issue, problem, or constraint, was "made relevant" did the faculty position themselves to take action against or for it. Individual and collective agency refers to the ability an individual or group has to "make relevant" and "critique" emerging or existing structural constraints, and then take action against them. A significant experience for Marilyn, illuminates her ability to make relevant an emerging structural constraint, critique it,

and subsequently take action against it. In the following passage she reflected on her experience with Proseminar (proseminar refers to a two year learning experience; the first year during the freshman year, and the second during the senior year):

> Proseminar is a significant experience for me personally. I was asked by our president and provost to serve as the director of pro seminar. Early on, pro seminar was touted by our president as the center piece of our institution - in some ways, he was hopeful it might be one of the only experiences that freshman and sophomores actually have, that's how seriously he took pro seminar. There was another extreme contigent that wanted nothing whatsoever to do with pro seminar. Some people just have a real thing about authority - so I'll just leave it at that and say there was a resistance movement. And then there was most people. Most people were open to the idea, but didn't have a clue what it might mean. As a result, they created their own vision about proseminar. They became increasingly open the more they crafted their own vision. These visions turned out not to be compatible. Three worlds - the president's, who thought it was the best thing since apple pie; a center group that said, okay, this might work as long as it's my vision; and a third group who said if the president wants it, I don't. That's a very small group, but a powerful one. (Interview, 9/8/95)

> A long comes a woman who was one of our consultants, and for me, is a hero, a profoundly wise woman. I went to her with all this data and asked, what am I going to do? She sat me down, asked me exactly the right questions, organized all the data through her questions. And because of that I was able to put together a proposal, with two competing visions, and I put it out to the community - just to help people really understand that there were at least two very incompatible views about pro seminar. Subsequently, we had a marvelous task force that worked really, really hard, I think maybe you witnessed some of that - lots of disagreement, very passionate dialogue, very passionate dialogue. And the out-growth of that was vision three - not vision one, not vision two, but a vision that integrated what we all believed was the best of everything. (8/15/95)

Here, Marilyn experienced the emerging constraints related to power relationships between the president and a small group of faculty members as well as the constraints related to different forming visions of proseminar amongst the faculty. What is noteworthy about this passage was Marilyn's ability to "make relevant" the different and competing "worlds" of proseminar. It was her ability to "make relevant" these opposing worlds that led to her "critique" (with the help of a consultant) these worlds, and subsequently re-present them to the community at large. In sum, the "action" she took to re-present her "critique" of the situation led to the facilitation of community dialogue, collaboration, and positive change.

Conclusion

Understanding the relationship between social structure and agency continues to be a central problem in general social theory. The purpose of this paper was to present preliminary concepts and ideas about the relationship between structure and agency in the first year of a new university so that a framework, recognizing the influence of both, may be built.

Using Marilyn's experiences to represent the "concrete universals" found in the first year of this new university, illuminated particular moments of the relationship between structure and agency. For instance, in Marilyn's anticipatory experience, her reading of the ad was a key moment in the development of her cultural understanding of the university. Although she was just one person with such an understanding, it was strengthened by a shared experience and understanding with other faculty members at the first faculty retreat. Her experiences with both the "ad in the chronicle" and the faculty retreat were key moments in the formation of the university's culture--one facilitating structure for the development of the university's vision.

As Marilyn moved into latter stages of engagement, key moments also illuminated structures that constrained the faculty's ability to implement aspects of the

university's vision. For example, in the process of developing the university's outcome based learning assessment, Marilyn encountered the technical constraints found in the organizational structure of the university system. Before any goals of an outcome based learning assessment could be achieved, the faculty first needed to find a creative way of working around this technical problem.

In addition to the technical constraints found working in a university system , there were also cultural constraints related to the traditional paradigm of higher education. Pressured by deadlines, Marilyn discovered a cultural constraint of traditional academia in conflict with their goal of an interdisciplinary curriculum. Here, innovation was fading as faculty and others "fell back" to traditional disciplinary boundaries.

Finally, Marilyn's experience with proseminar was another key moment that illuminated not only the emerging constraint of different visions of proseminar, but Marilyn's ability to make relevant this constraint, critique it, and take action against it to facilitate change.

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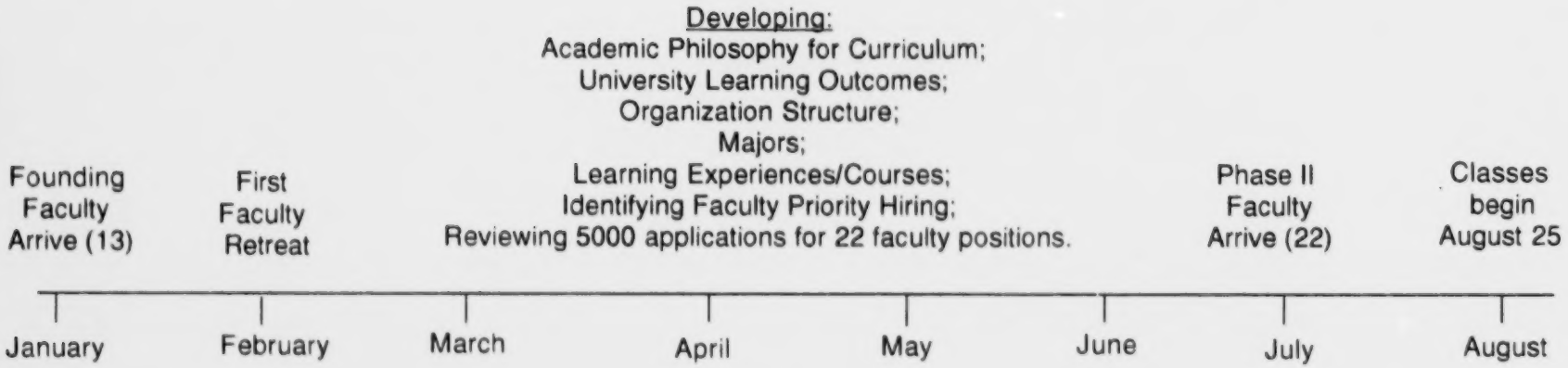

Figure 1. Time line of major events and activities for founding faculty members (January through August 1995)